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ABSTRACT

The financial crisis in the graduate education of students in the liberal arts is not as severe as it is in the sciences, since the liberal arts never received large grants to begin with. Yet the job market is pinching that area too, becuase its only job market, higher education, is experiencing severe financial strains. It has become necessary to make the Ph.D. more flexible than it has been, to prepare more than research-oriented specialists. Doctoral candidates must be interested and prepared for teaching careers not only in universities, but also in 4-year undergraduate colleges and 2-year institutions. The crisis in not an oversupply of Ph.D.'s, but a lack of funds. If there are to be cutbacks, they should be in programs that are of dubious academic quality, as measured by "standard" criteria, and in programs mounted by highpowered institutions that have greatly expanded their number of Ph.D.'s. (AF)

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THE OUTLOOK FROM THE UNIVERSITY
(THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND THE HUMANITIES)*

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*Address presented at the 10th Annual Meeting of the Council of Graduate Schools in the United States, Miami Beach, Florida, Wednesday, December 2, 1970.

DR. RICHARD P. ADAMS: I am not very well-qualified to speak about the social sciences and I probably won't be able to say very much about them except as their plight resembles that of the liberal arts.

I am a little at sea in this Conference--or should I say "in the fog," since I got here so late. I discovered after I got here that another flight had arrived from New Orleans between 1 and 2 o'clock, so I am a little sour at the moment about three things: One, nature; two, science and technology (laughter); and three, institutions, namely American Airlines.

(Laughter.)

I would like to say just a word about the importance of the liberal arts in the general picture of things as they are at the moment. I think there is nothing that we need more that could be more practical in our present situation than a very strong cultivation of imagination.

We have gotten to the point now, technologically, where we can have pretty much any kind of a world we want. I am not sure we have gotten to the point where we are sufficiently able to imagine the kind

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of world we ought to have. I think that is the business of the liberal arts and that it is vital that they be healthy.

So the specific things I say will be posited on that general assumption.

I had the privilege of attending last month a conference sponsored by the Association of Departments of English which was called a bellwether conference. I wasn't altogether happy about that, either; I don't think I'm that kind of a sheep. (Laughter.) But that's what they called it.

It was about the job market and the Ph.D. programs, specifically in the field of English. There was a good deal of moaning and wringing of hands, as you can imagine, about the job market and so on. But after the conference settled down a bit, the recommendations took a line that you might not have foreseen.

We began the conference with a rather bitter complaint about what was called "the Ph.D." and that put me on edge, again, because as you all know there is no such thing as "the Ph.D." There are as many Ph.Ds as there are holders of Ph.Ds, and there are as many different kinds of Ph.Ds, at least, as there are Ph.D.

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programs. So it isn't quite the monolithic thing that the phrase "the Ph.D." seems to imply.

The complaint was that "the Ph.D." is a very narrow specialized research degree and that therefor it not only does not prepare people to teach in undergraduate institutions of higher learning, but actually unfits them for that duty.

Well, this complaint came from a gentleman who lives in New York City and, of course, New York City is well-known as being perhaps the most provincial place on earth. (Laughter.) And it seemed to me that conditions out in the boondocks, the foggy swamps of Louisiana for example, weren't quite that way. The fact is, of course, that something like 95 percent of Ph.Ds in English go out and teach English. I had thought that we were well aware of that fact and that our program was designed with that in mind.

But nevertheless, I think the recommendations that came out of this bellwether conference were sound and they lay along the line of the kind of flexibility that my colleagues in the sciences have just been talking about; that is, that we must convince our candidates that they are preparing for teaching careers; we

must guarantee that they are capable of doing it, and we must do what we can to make them interested in that kind of a career and let them know that there are no jobs in pure research in the liberal arts, and I think there are not very many in the social sciences.

Now, we do have, of course, a problem. The loss of support, financial support for graduate programs and graduate students is not quite so traumatic in the liberal arts as it is in the sciences or even perhaps the social sciences because we never had as much.

We have managed to get along while our colleagues in the so-called "hard sciences" were prospering and we never believed that thing about their prosperity spilling over on us. It didn't, and we knew it didn't.

(Laughter.)

So we are not suffering quite the anguish that some of our colleagues are in that particular respect. However, the job market is pinching us, and rather badly, because the only job market we have got is in higher education and when the salary budgets in higher education get squeezed, our candidates have a hard time.

So the kind of flexibility that we are talking about which would make Ph.Ds in English or

doctorates acceptable in four-year undergraduate institutions and in the junior colleges and two-year colleges of various kinds is very desirable.

Actually, the planning that was done ten years ago in anticipation of the greatly expanded enrollments was not mistaken.

I have heard some noises of guilty feelings and so on that we overexpanded our programs. I don't think that's true at all. The demand, the real demand, was there and is there. There is a smaller percentage of Ph.Ds on the faculties of institutions of higher learning now than there was ten years ago, so if there was a shortage then, there is a bigger shortage now.

Crisis is budgetary, it's financial, and from that point of view it is quite real.

Unfortunately, there is not very much that we can do in the short run to reduce the supply, as others have observed. The pipeline is there, people are in it, they are going to come along and graduate in due course. Whatever we do now will not have an effect on the supply for at least four, five, six years, by which time the market situation may be quite different.

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The continued increase in undergraduate enrollments suggests that somehow or other there will have to be a continued supply for the next several years until the birth rate begins to go the other way, if it does. We just don't know that.

The market in 1932 was bad; the market in 1951 when I got my Ph.D. was pretty bad, too. So, again, we are pinched in what may very probably be a short-term stringency.

The cutbacks, if there are to be cutbacks, should be made, it seems to me, in two categories of Ph.D. programs, looking at it from the point of view of liberal arts and, as well as I am able, from the point of view of the social sciences.

One, programs which were undertaken in a very laudible desire to supply a shortage of qualified college teachers, but which are of dubious academic quality. That is not a matter merely of selecting the most recent ones, because some of the recent ones are very good. But it is a matter of setting up some kind of criteria as to what constitutes a good, sound academic program toward the doctorate degree and suggesting, somewhat pointedly, to people whose programs don't measure

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up to those criteria that they perhaps should reconsider and abandon them.

The other category consists of programs which are undertaken by high-powered institutions which are certainly capable of mounting a sound academic program, but which have greatly expanded the numbers of Ph.Ds that they put out.

I think it might be suggested, again, somewhat pointedly to those institutions, that they reduce their number, not that they go out of business, but that they cut back numbers.

That leaves a category of programs which are academically sound and which have not greatly expanded which, I think, should be left pretty much as they are.

Now, there has been a good deal of talk in the liberal arts about a proposed teaching degree, a teaching doctorate, a Doctor of Arts degree, and this organization has made some recommendations as to what sort of thing that ought to be.

I would have to report that the people gathered at the bellwether conference were not enthusiastic about the Doctor of Arts concept. They preferred to go in another direction of saying that Ph.D. degrees are and

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can and should be sufficiently various that they perform the function for which the Doctor of Arts degree is designed.

The Ph.D. doesn't have to be narrow and it doesn't have to unfit people for undergraduate education.

That may suggest some changes of policy in some programs. If, indeed, a program is narrow, then I think it should be broadened. But I don't think that a new name for a degree is going to be of very much use, and I am sure you have all heard the arguments pro and con, one way and the other.

The only thing I have to report that would be new to you is the reaction of the English Department chairmen who were gathered in the bellwether conference.

Now, probably there is a good deal I ought to say that I am not able to say at this point. If I had been here for the beginning of the session, I might have picked up on some things. Maybe there will be a chance to question me later on.